GENERAL CACTUS INFORMATION

(Updated March, 2008)

CACTUS Help Page:

http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/cactus/cactus help.htm

What is CACTUS?

CACTUS is an acronym for Computer Aided Credentials of Teachers for Utah Schools. It is a computer system used to maintain official information about Utah Licensed K-12 Educators. It consists of both a central database and user interfaces.

For each educator the database contains such information as: address, license and endorsements, degrees, authorizations, and current and previous district and school assignments. Also included in the database are: records of educator inservice programs, a hierarchical table of teaching assignments/subjects, background check data, and records of licensing disciplinary actions.

Depending on the intended use, the database can be accessed in several ways. There is a client/server Internet-compatible interface for high volume maintenance. While this interface also has numerous built-in features for reporting and data analysis, there are many other independent tools that can be also employed. Batch updating and extracting processes are also available on request. Parts of the data can be accessed from the Web. Some of the information about individuals is public information, some is protected, but all of the information available through CACTUS may only be accessed by authorized individuals.

Who uses CACTUS

CACTUS is primarily for the use and benefit of Utah's professional K-12 educators and those who have responsibilities managing, supervising and coordinating those human resources. Users must have prior written permission from designated USOE personnel.

How do I get access to CACTUS?

CACTUS is a confidential and secure system. **Unauthorized use is strictly prohibited and violators will be prosecuted**. If you feel you have a need and right to access CACTUS please contact the Utah State Office of Education Educator Licensing office.

Mailing address:

Utah State Office of Education Educator Licensing P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200

phone: 801-538-7740

email: Amanda.Charlesworth@schools.utah.gov

Educator Quality Web address: http://www.schools.utah.gov/cert/

Getting Started With CACTUS

Running CACTUS from the Web

You can choose to install CACTUS on your computer (instructions in the next paragraph) or you can run CACTUS from the web, also called Terminal Server. Click on this link for help with Terminal Server.

Installation

After you have received permission and the appropriate security information from the Utah State Office of Education you may begin to use CACTUS. Unless you are accessing your individual educator record from the Web you will need to install some software on your computer. The CACTUS client software is easy to install. There are instructions for the installation of CACTUS in this online help.

Some Assumptions

In order to use CACTUS successfully it is assumed you have some experience using applications within Microsoft Windows. You do not have to be very experienced, just some very basic skills will do. Persons who have little or no experience using Microsoft Windows but who have experience with other GUIs such as the Macintosh or X-Windows should also have little difficulty using CACTUS. One thing you should become aware of, is the use of the right mouse button in Microsoft Windows systems. If the cursor is over an object in a window to which you want to apply some action, clicking the right mouse button often results in the display of a pop-up menu. A good example of this is the addition of an assignment in the Current Assignments tab page. To add a new assignment record, just right click below the last assignment in the displayed table and a menu will pop up. This menu will allow you to choose numerous actions including adding and deleting records from the table. If you need some more help or want to review the fundamentals there is a section in help called Windows GUI.

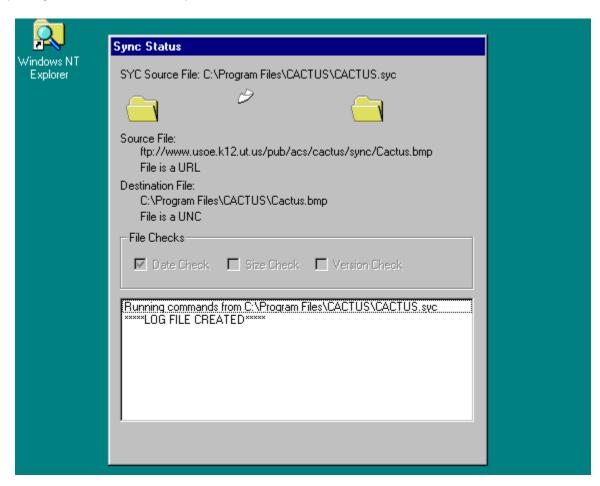
Everyone who uses this help system needs to be aware of one very import thing. This help is a general help system written for all types of users of CACTUS. Depending which group of users you belong to you will have different rights or permissions within CACTUS. For example, you may be able to see and update some things other types of users never see much less are able to update. There is a list of user groups which defines in general terms what each user group is able to do with CACTUS. If you are part of a user group with a "DIST" prefix you are part of a group whose access to educators is restricted to those in your home district. For more details about what your group is able to do within a given function you should refer to the detailed help for that window, tab page or function. If you do not know what group you belong to click on the Help menu item, then on "About". Your user id and security group will be listed.

Starting CACTUS

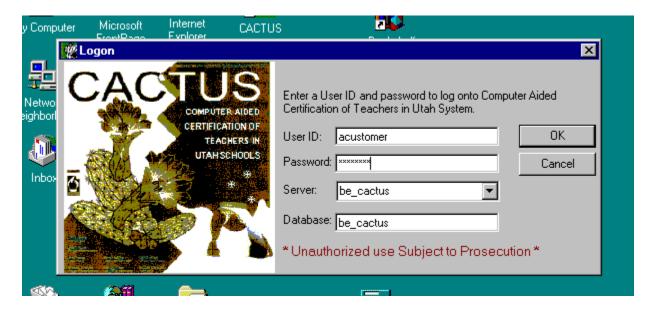
Regardless of how you acquire the CACTUS software the installation process will place a CACTUS icon on your desktop and a CACTUS folder and icon in the **Programs** menu. The **Programs** menu item is found "under" the **Start Button**. If you lose the icon from the desktop remember you can always find it in the CACTUS folder in the Programs folder. If you can't find either you can always reinstall CACTUS. The entire install usually takes less than a minute.



The first window you will see when you click on the CACTUS icon should be what is called the synchronizer process or "sync feature". This can last anywhere from a few seconds to a couple of minutes. Usually, it takes just a few seconds. You really don't need to be concerned about what is occurring, but if you're curious . . . The CACTUS software which runs the user interface is designed so you should only have to deal with a CD-ROM or FTP a big file one time. If components of CACTUS change after this initial install, just those parts are placed in an FTP site where CACTUS looks for them each time it starts up. Every time CACTUS starts the synchronizer goes out over the Internet and looks for updated components it may need to copy and use to replace older components which it already has on your machine. If if "sees" some updated components it goes ahead and copies them before it lets you login. Here's what the synchronizer window looks like



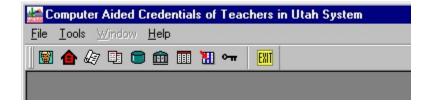
After the synchronizer is finished finding and updating or adding any changed or new components you will see the logon or security window shown below.



Enter your User ID and password and click on "OK" or press "Enter". IF you are already logged on a network the User ID is usually filled-in with your network User ID. Please note: This may or may not be the same as your CACTUS User ID. The Password box will always be empty. Although you can change your password for CACTUS to be the same as another password you use, make sure you practice good password habits. Change them often, use random strings of letters and numbers (not the names of your kids, pets or favorite car) and do not write them down. The Password Change window in CACTUS may be enforcing some of these guidelines. Unless given instructions to do otherwise never change the information entered in the Server or Database boxes.

If you get a small dialog box or window after trying to logon and it says "Logon Failed" you will need to try again by double-clicking on the CACTUS icon once more. Please check to make sure you are using the correct User ID and Password, and that the Caps Lock light on your keyboard is off. Sometimes other things go wrong when you try to logon. If you are sure you are using a good logon id and password check to make sure you are on the Internet. Can you use your Web browser? If you can but still can not logon to CACTUS, the CACTUS database may be down. Check the FAQ and Trouble Shooting section for more help

Next you will see the main CACTUS window. It looks like this:



When the cursor is held over an icon a label will appear. Click on the schoolhouse icon to open the district/school search, and continue with the help for that window. The icons on the main CACTUS window, the menu items and drop down menus, also appear in the left side table of contents for this help Web. This allows you to easily reference the area of the system where you need help.

If you are not feeling very comfortable with Windows please look at the Windows GUI section or get some basic Windows training.

How To Do Common CACTUS Procedures and Processes

- Changing your password
- Finding the educators in your district
- Checking the status of licenses and endorsements
- Determining if the educator has an endorsement exemption
- Checking the status of a state-approved endorsement program
- Checking the degree and entering the degree summary level
- Changing a home address
- Checking on a professional development class
- Hiring a new educator
- Entering out of state experience or prior experience in your district
- Entering experience
- Entering an assignment
- Assigning an educator to more than one school
- Terminating an Educator
- Finding authorized educators
- Requesting a letter of authorization
- Entering a professional development class
- Finding an existing professional development class
- <u>Duplicating an existing professional development class</u>
- Printing
- Mailing Labels
- Email Addresses
- Adding a District to the Institution Table
- Adding a School to the Institution Table